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MAINTENANCE OF INTERNATIONAL SECURITY

Letter dated 13 June 1997 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Yugoslavia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of a statement made by His Excellency Mr. Milan Milutinovic, Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia at the meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs the Countries of South-Eastern Europe held in Thessaloniki, Greece, on 9 and 10 June 1997 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the text of the present letter and its annex circulated as an official document of the General Assembly, under item 81 of the preliminary list.

(Signed) Vladislav JOVANOVIC
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

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ANNEX

Statement made by the Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia at the meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Countries of South-Eastern Europe, held at Thessaloniki, Greece, on 9 and 10 June 1997

The holding of our meeting at Thessaloniki in the organization of the hospitable Greek hosts has a certain symbolic connotation, since we have gathered today in the cultural capital of Europe. This is yet another confirmation that the countries of this region constitute an inseparable part of Europe, of the legacy and developments of its civilization.

The basic goal of our meeting is precisely to contribute to the effect that our region, which is of great strategic and economic and communication importance for the whole continent, become an area of lasting peace, good-neighbourly cooperation, trust and prosperity. The interests of peace, stability and overall development impose upon all of us the obligation and responsibility to ensure for our region an active and equitable place in the current European developments and aspirations by strengthening our cooperation in South-Eastern Europe. In this complementarity and interdependence we see the road for full and lasting stability in the Balkans and thereby in Europe. The developments in the region since our last meeting at Sofia have proved that the efforts aimed at using the natural interlinkage and common destiny for the strengthening of comprehensive cooperation and the relations of good-neighbourliness were justified and indispensable.

Our gathering today is being held in the conditions of relatively positive developments in the region and of realistic expectations that we could make that process a lasting one. This has been accomplished thanks also to the significant contribution to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which has based its overall policy and actions on the safeguarding of lasting peace and on building comprehensive cooperation with all neighbours on the basis of equality, common interests and good-neighbourliness. This, however, does not mean that we are not aware of the dangers that could jeopardize this process, including in particular those connected with the recent developments in the immediate neighbourhood. We are nevertheless convinced that we can overcome successfully all the obstacles by joint efforts and through cooperation, while consistently respecting the adopted principles of our relations, constantly fostering mutual trust, peace and stability.

Although the peace process in the territories of the former Yugoslavia has significantly advanced, it is still necessary to exert additional efforts towards a prompt and consistent implementation of the Dayton-Paris Agreement in order to ensure lasting peace. At the same time, any attempts to change, revise amend or arbitrary interpret this Agreement must be resolutely prevented. The countries of the region and the international community have concrete obligations and responsibilities in that respect. In our opinion, the following stage should ensure an efficient functioning and strengthening of the role and responsibility of the already established authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, both at the level of the Union and of the two entities - the Republika Srpska

and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina - including the indispensable constituting of other organs envisaged by the Peace Agreement. In this context, the successful holding of local elections is of special significance. It is also very important to ensure free and safe return of refugees, as well as larger and more consistent involvement of the international community in urgent rebuilding and reconstruction, through investments in both entities and on equal footing. The conclusions of the meeting of the Steering Board of the Peace Implementation Council recently held at Sintra gave an encouraging impetus towards this direction.

One of the crucial factors for the strengthening of stability in the region is the normalization and further positive development of the relations between the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in the former Yugoslav republics. The strengthening of these relations has been and remains the priority of the Yugoslav policy of peace, stability and good-neighbourliness. On this basis and fully respecting the rights, positions and interests of the newly established States, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has normalized relations and develops cooperation with Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

It is in the interest of all countries of the region to create, by constructive efforts, patience and mutual trust, the climate for the broadest cooperation and pragmatic solution of all questions, and of open bilateral issues in particular. In this respect, the strengthening of all forms of bilateral cooperation is of special importance, being at the same time a precondition for a successful regional cooperation. We consider that all available possibilities have not been used yet, irrespective of undoubted progress achieved in this field during the last years.

In order to achieve this, it is necessary that comprehensive regional cooperation becomes a priority of the political strategies of all our countries. Harmonized and comprehensive development of both bilateral and regional cooperation ensures stable and dynamic development of the region as a whole, as well as of each individual country. Regional cooperation should ensure better use of natural, economic and human potentials that are at our disposal. The precondition for a more rapid association of the Balkans with the integration processes in Europe is creating a climate that is open for modern economic, scientific, technological and cultural achievements of the world.

In this context we have particularly in mind the necessity to accomplish the integration of all countries of the region into the European road and railway network, on equal terms, taking into account the traditional main lines, the principle of rationality and the already existing transportation infrastructure. The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia fully supports the incorporation of corridor X into the European network, as well as the extension of corridor VI from Zilina, via Budapest and Belgrade to the Adriatic Sea.

The draft declaration of good-neighbourly relations, stability, security and cooperation in the Balkans, which is before us, contains elaborated positions and realistic proposals. The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia renders its full support to the final document and will be consistent in fulfilling its share of responsibility in its implementation.

On this occasion, I wish to point out in particular the importance of the following initiatives:

(a) Establishment of the practice of regular meetings of ministers of different departments with the aim to promote interstate cooperation in the fields of vital importance for all countries of the region. We also fully support the continuation of the practice of annual meetings of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, with the participation of other countries interested in cooperation with the Balkan countries. We are also open for the organization of the meetings at the highest level and welcome the initiative of Greece on holding a meeting of the heads of State or Government by the end of this year;

(b) Realization of our proposal presented at our last ministerial meeting in Sofia, to establish a consultative assembly consisting of representative of Parliaments of the countries of South-Eastern Europe. The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia will attach special attention to the realization of this proposal, while the Federal Assembly of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia will send a concrete proposal to the national Parliaments of your countries for consideration;

(c) Establishment of the zone of free trade in the Balkans is, we are convinced, in the interest of all Balkan countries. In this context, we positively assess the initiated process of liberalization of mutual trade through numerous bilateral agreements between our countries that have been already signed, or are being prepared.

A very significant contribution to the positive development in the region and to our joint efforts in this field is given by the so-called Royaumont Initiative of the European Union and the American initiative SECI, as well as by the existing regional cooperation initiatives in South-Eastern and Central Europe. The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia renders its full support to these initiatives, underlying that they should be complementary and open for equitable participation of all countries of South-Eastern Europe, without any conditioning.

We consider that the return of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to all international organizations and institutions is indispensable, in the interest of cooperation, stability and further democratic development of the region. Without this, all our joint efforts will be, if not significantly limited, then less efficient, not bringing the expected results. By expressing the appreciation for the support rendered thus far, I wish to say that we expect that our partners from South-Eastern Europe will give us a more decisive and concrete support in these efforts, creating thereby the conditions, inter alia, for full realization of joint projects of our countries at a more rapid pace.

At the end I wish to express special satisfaction over the working atmosphere and the spirit of understanding and cooperation prevailing at this meeting. This additionally assures us that, at the threshold of the third millennium, there exist conditions for the Balkan countries to base their relations on the principles of modern civilizational achievements and on common interests, while bearing in mind the teachings and experience of history.